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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 07 MINSK 000463

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: Post-Election Polling: Lukashenko Wins, but Not by As Much

Ref: Minsk 285

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1. Summary: The IISEPS polling service recently unveiled the results of the first post-election poll. IISEPS found that about 64% of the electorate voted for Lukashenko, 20% less than the regime claims. Despite this discrepancy, a slim majority of Belarusians view the elections as free and fair. Despite official repression, mass arrests and ceaseless regime propaganda, the opposition campaigns reached up to a quarter of voters, although most had decided for whom to vote long before the election. Most Belarusians do not believe the worst elements of state propaganda, even though over 50% of Belarusians consider themselves to be Soviet, rather than European, people. Most Belarusians have heard of the post-election demonstrations, even if most do not approve of the protests and very few would be willing to participate themselves. A large majority of Belarusians continue to rely on state media for information, although growing numbers use the internet and watch EuroNews or satellite television. Very few have ever listened to radio transmitted from abroad. End summary.

2. On April 21, Oleg Manaev, head of the de-registered IISEPS sociological research center, presented the results of post-election polling to Ambassador. IISEPS conducted this polling between 27 March and 6 April, polling 1,496 respondents across the country. Manaev said the polling has a margin of error of three percent.

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Election Results: Lukashenko Wins, but by Less  
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3. IISEPS asked several questions to gauge the percentage of voters who supported Lukashenko. Each question found that around 63% voted for Lukashenko, somewhat less than the officially announced 83%. Manaev stated that the results of this poll, particularly regarding Lukashenko's support, vary little from IISEPS last poll, conducted in February (reftel). At that time 58.6% said they would vote for Lukashenko and 16.5% for Milinkevich. The February poll was conducted just before it became legal for campaign teams to start meeting voters and passing out literature, demonstrating that the campaigns themselves had little influence on how Belarusians voted.

Who did you vote for in the March 19 presidential election?

Lukashenko	63.6%
Milinkevich	20.6
Kozulin	4.8
Gaidukevich	2.1

Against all	3.4
Do not want to answer	5.4

If tomorrow there were new presidential elections, for whom would you vote? (write in answer)

Lukashenko	0.3%
Milinkevich	18.4
Kozulin	3.7
Gaidukevich	1.0
Shushkevich	0.6

6 others each received less than 0.5%

Lukashenko again became President. Was that what you personally wanted?

Yes	59.8%
No	33.4

Did the candidate for whom you voted become President?

Yes	61.4%
No	30.5

Do you trust the President of Belarus?

Yes	59.9%
No	31.2

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Elections Were Free and Fair  
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14. A majority of Belarusians believes the March 19 presidential election was held in a free and fair manner, although roughly 30% consistently stated that there was falsification. Far more attributed falsification to Lukashenko's campaign than to that of the other candidates.

Do you think the March 19, 2006 presidential elections were free and fair?

Yes	57.9%
No	32.9

Do you think that election results announced by the Central Election Committee were actual or falsified results?

Without a doubt actual	38.1%
More or less actual	25.6
More or less falsified	14.1
Without a doubt falsified	14.9

The Committee of Youth Organizations and the EKOOM polling center conducted an election survey at the entrances of polling stations (exit polls). Their results practically coincided with the official election results. Do you trust the results of this exit poll?

Yes, because they gave citizens objective information about the voting process and results	45.6%
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No, because they knowingly presented distorted information in the interests of those who paid for their research	29.9
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Did you experience any pressure forcing you to vote for a

particular candidate?

Yes	14.0%
No	81.9

If you participated in the elections, did you vote early (14-18 March) or on Sunday March 19?

Voted early	25.7%
Voted on Election Day	65.8

In your opinion, did all candidates have equal conditions during the course of elections?

Yes	48.3%
No	43.1

If you noticed any violations, then on behalf of whom, in your opinion, were these violations committed?

Lukashenko	37.1%
Milinkevich	6.3
Kozulin	3.8
Gaidukevich	1.4
For all candidates	2.4
No violations noticed	31.7

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Opposition Campaign Reached Some Voters  
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15. Most respondents replied that their main sources of information are those controlled by the government, television, newspapers and radio. Word-of-mouth also served as an important means of spreading information, and opposition candidates reached one-fifth of voters with their campaign materials (Lukashenko's team did not distribute any flyers). This can be considered a success given the short amount of time the opposition had to campaign and the series repression and mass arrests they suffered from. Manaev pointed out that most respondents claimed they decided who to vote for well in advance of the election, but nearly one-third did not decide until the last week - meaning they were open to influence by the campaigns.

From what sources did you receive information on candidates and their programs?

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Television	69.6%
Newspapers	49.7
Colleagues, acquaintances and neighbors	32.1
Radio	24.0
Various printed materials left in mail box	22.6
Campaign flyers and posters	21.1
Meetings with candidates and their proxies	6.4
Bosses	5.5
No information received	5.1

Whose informational material did you receive? Whose representatives did you meet with?

Milinkevich	25.6%
Kozulin	14.2
Lukashenko	9.9
Gaidukevich	3.6

Did you see the presidential candidates' speeches on TV?

Yes, the February 22 speeches	11.3%
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Yes, the March 2 speeches	15.3
Yes, both the February and March speeches	36.3
No, did not watch any of them	37.1

Which of the speeches gave you the biggest impression?

Milinkevich's speech	15.8%
Kozulin's speech	13.7
Gaidukevich's speech	2.2
No impression	35.9

[Note: Lukashenko did not make an official campaign speech, but did dominate most news broadcasts.]

Did these speeches influence your decision on who to vote for?

Did not influence	35.9%
Influenced to a degree	18.8
Greatly influenced	9.3

Did you have enough information on candidates for president in order to make a sure choice?

Yes	71.6%
No	27.4

When did you decide who you would vote for?

Long before the elections	68.3%
On the eve of elections (5-6 days)	23.6
On Election Day	8.0

What two questions are more important to you when deciding who to vote for? (Only two choices allowed)

General quality of life	43.9%
Democracy and an independent Belarus	21.5
Places of work	19.9
Price growth	19.2
Improving health care	18.2
Payment of pensions	16.3
Demands of freedom in Belarus	9.0
Corruption in society	8.6
Relations with Russia	7.4
Education	7.4
Relations with the West	6.2
Threat of terrorism	5.9
Crime	5.2
Freedom of religion	0.9

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Public Acceptance of Propaganda  
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16. Most respondents, despite their support and vote for Lukashenko, do not accept some of the regime's propaganda. Most did not believe the head of the BKGB's pre-election statements that the opposition was planning a coup and that peaceful demonstrations are

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terrorism. Most also view the arrests of opposition activists as being politically motivated.

Recently many people have said that external forces are trying to create a "colored revolution" in Belarus. In your opinion, do such claims conform to reality or not?

Yes, Absolutely True	22.1%
More or Less True	32.8
More or Less Not True	22.3
No, Absolutely False	11.1

On March 16 the head of the BKGB, Sergey Sukharenko, publicly announced that some were "planning a violent takeover of power under the pretext of presidential elections." Do you agree with this announcement?

Yes	30.9%
No	49.1

Sukharenko also announced that to actively participate in demonstrations protesting presidential election results would be viewed as terrorism. Do you agree that mass protests are acts of terrorism?

Yes	26.8%
No	58.1

Before the elections, several representatives of democratic forces, who openly express their disagreement with the current political system, were arrested for preparing terrorist acts. Do you think their arrests were politically motivated or do you think they were arrested based on real facts that they were preparing terrorist acts?

Their arrests were politically motivated	57.0%
Their arrests were based on real evidence	26.3

At the All Belarusian People's Assembly held in the beginning of March in Minsk, Lukashenko said that the country's political and economical course of development was correct and would not be changed in the next five years. Do you agree with his statement?

Yes	54.2%
No	36.4

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Protests of Election Results  
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17. A majority of Belarusians have heard of the post-election demonstrations, but a slim majority side with Lukashenko in opposing western and opposition calls for new elections and believe that Lukashenko's victory will unite Belarus. However, only a small minority said they would take part in demonstrations themselves.

Did you know that beginning on March 19 on October Square in Minsk occurred a protest against the falsified election results, involving thousands of people who demanded freedom in the country and a second vote?

Yes	69.4%
No	26.9

What do you think of this act of protest?

Accept it	20.4%
Do not accept it	45.9

The U.S., EU, European Parliament, European Commission and other influential international structures did not accept the presidential election results in Belarus because they "did not meet OSCE standards." These organizations supported the opposition's demands on holding a second vote. Some consider this decision fair, but others do not. What do you think?

Fair decision	27.3%
Unfair decision	54.2

Lukashenko's victory at the elections, in your opinion, further united Belarusian society or deepened the division?

Further united society	55.9%
Deepened the division	27.1

How do you view participation in public actions to express your opinions?

	Took Part	Ready to Take Part	Would not Take Part
Meetings, demonstrations	5.8%	10.9%	78.1%
Strikes	1.1	10.0	82.7
Hunger strikes	0.3	4.7	89.2
Armed resistance	0.6	4.5	88.0

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Socio-Economic Background of the Elections  
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18. IISEPS found that a majority of respondents are pleased with the direction their country is taking, although a significant minority indicated otherwise, believe it is hard for youth to find a decent job, and would emigrate if given the chance.

How has your life and that of your family changed since 2001?

Changed for the better	38.9%
Did not change	44.0
Changed for the worse	15.5

In your view, in general is our country developing in the correct or incorrect direction?

Correct direction	59.5%
Incorrect direction	30.7

Can youth today have a successful career in Belarus?

Yes	54.4%
No	30.1
Don't know	15.5

Would you want to emigrate to another country?

No	61.6%
To the U.S.	9.1
To Germany	7.6
To Russia	3.9
To Poland	2.5
To the Baltics	1.0

(in total 30.8% of respondents expressed the desire to emigrate)

In general, are people in Belarus fully free, partially free, not very free or fully not free?

Fully free	27.5%
Partially free	32.2
Not fully free	21.5
Fully not free	16.2

In the past three years have government authorities offended you?

No	60.4%
Many times	8.9
A few times	18.7
Once	8.9

(36.5% of respondents reported being offended at least once by a government official)

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Belarusians Identify More with the USSR than the EU  
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19. Manaev said he was surprised at the results of the question regarding whether people view themselves as more Soviet or European, although he admitted that he could not define what it

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meant to be Soviet. Over 2003 and 2004, the EU was gaining in popularity compared to union with Russia, and in some polls proved more popular. The results in this poll compare to those from February, but show the EU has dropped in popularity, likely as a result of the regime's constant propaganda against the EU and the West.

Do you consider yourself more of a Soviet or a European?

Soviet	52.0%
European	36.0

If there were to be a referendum on accepting the Constitution on the Belarusian and Russian Union, how would you vote?

For Constitution	48.2%
Against Constitution	28.3
Would Not Vote	10.4

If there was a referendum tomorrow on Belarus' accession to the EU, how would you vote?

For EU Accession	34.2%
Against Accession	44.7
Would Not Vote	10.2

If you had to choose between a union with Russia or entry to the EU, which would you choose?

Union with Russia	56.1%
Entry to EU	31.9

If a presidential post was created for Belarus and Russia, who would you vote for that position?

Lukashenko	44.4%
Putin	22.0
Milinkevich	1.5
Zhirinovski	1.3
Another Politician	2.3

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International Relations Following Elections  
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In your opinion, how is Lukashenko's reelection influencing Belarus' relationship with the West?

Improving relationship with the West	16.4%
Worsening relationship with the West	45.7
Relationship not affected	29.8

In your opinion, how is Lukashenko's reelection influencing Belarus' relationship with Russia?

Improving relationship with Russia	45.2%
Worsening relationship with Russia	13.5
Relationship not affected	37.3

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Information Access  
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¶10. Most Belarusians continue to receive their news from state television and newspapers, but alternatives are growing in importance. A sizeable number watch EuroNews, have a DVD player or VCR (Milinkevich's team passed out DVDs and CD-ROM campaign movies before the election), and more say they use the internet with every poll. However, attempts to reach Belarusians with radio from abroad has so far had only marginal success, with no foreign station attracting for than 4% of listeners (in a poll with a 3% margin of error).

What TV channels do you watch?

Channels -----	Watch -----	Do Not Watch -----	No Answer -----
Belarusian TV (BT, ONT, CTV)	88.9%	9.8%	1.3%
Russian TV (ORT, RTR, NTV)	79.3	18.9	1.8
Local TV	39.7	55.5	4.8

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Cable TV	33.3	61.5	5.2
EuroNews (Russian Version)	19.5	75.3	5.2
Satellite TV	14.9	79.2	5.9
Polish TV	10.1	83.6	6.3
Weekly RTVI broadcasts	5.7	87.4	6.9

Not long ago the EU began radio broadcasts to Belarus (in Russian and Belarusian). Do you listen to these broadcasts?

Radio Stations -----	Listen -----	Do Not Listen -----	No Answer -----
European Radio for Belarus (Warsaw)	3.7%	94.7%	1.6%
Belarusian Chronicles Radio, German Wave (Bonn)	2.4	96.4	1.2
Belarusian Radio Polonia (Warsaw)	3.1	95.3	1.6
Radio Ratsi (Belyastok)	1.9	96.5	1.6
Radio Baltiski Khvaliya (Vilnius)	1.0	97.1	1.9

What periodical publication do you read more than the rest? (More than one answer)

Sovetskaya Belarus	20.5%
Local paper	22.6
Komsomolskaya Pravda	16.4
Argument and Fact	7.0
Respublika	5.1
Narodnaya Volya	3.0
Antenna	1.8

Do you have a VCR or DVD player to watch films?

DVD player	10.6%
VCR	30.1
Both	16.5
Neither	41.8

Do you use the internet?

Yes, everyday	4.7%
Yes, several times per week	8.8
Yes, several times per month	7.7
Yes, several times per year	3.8



No	70.1
Do not know what is internet	3.9

What language do you use in everyday life?

Belarusian	3.5%
Russian	61.0
Both	12.9
Mixed usage	21.5

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